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11 June 1964

**MEMORANDUM FOR: Special Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs**

SUBJECT: National Reconnaissance Program

1. You have asked for my comments on the report submitted by the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board on May 2, 1964 concerning the National Reconnaissance Program.
2. In many respects I have found the conclusions of this report constructive and helpful. However, the proposed Presidential Directive contains certain organizational proposals which do not seem to me calculated to provide the most productive possible utilization of national resources for the reconnaissance effort of the government. If those proposals are adopted, I do not believe that it will be possible to discharge the responsibilities which the report itself envisages for the Director of Central Intelligence or that the Central Intelligence Agency can perform the mission which the report apparently contemplates for the Agency.
3. I believe that certain basic principles must be established and recognized if, as the conclusions of the report state, the reconnaissance program is to "be conducted as a national effort geared to meet as effectively as possible overriding national intelligence needs." The conclusions of the report correctly characterize the National Reconnaissance Program as a "vitally important enterprise" which must be conducted as a "national effort, " the national character of which "must be maintained through a joint endeavor

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on the part of the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the United States Intelligence Board." The problem is to delineate clearly the roles and responsibilities of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Department in support of a national program while maintaining its character as a "joint endeavor."

4. Some of the principles which I have in mind find support in some of the language of the report but appear to be obscured and contradicted elsewhere in the report, particularly by the implications of provisions in the proposed Presidential Directive. I consider it important to identify those principles as clearly as possible as I am convinced that their adoption is an essential prerequisite to a reconnaissance effort conducted for national intelligence purposes on a collaborative basis which makes maximum use of all resources available to the government.

5. These basic principles involve (a) clear recognition of the Director of Central Intelligence's joint responsibility with the Secretary of Defense for the development of the reconnaissance program and (b) assurance that the capabilities of CIA, in both the operational and the research and development fields are fully utilized. I believe that the President's Board agrees with those objectives. In order to make sure that there is full understanding of those principles, however, they are defined and discussed in the following paragraphs.

A. The Director of Central Intelligence should participate fully in the formulation of the plan for the National Reconnaissance Program and in decisions relating to the assignment and implementation of responsibilities and the allocation of resources under the program.

The effectiveness of our reconnaissance program depends upon an intimate interrelationship between intelligence requirements and priorities, and the

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development and utilization of the effort and resources necessary to satisfy these requirements. Essential ingredients of the program are (in addition to the identification of targets, the establishment of collection schedules and processing of the take): (a) assignment of responsibility for research and development to produce new and improved collection systems, (b) allocation of responsibility for specific operational activity, (c) budgeting and programming to finance individual activities, and (d) review and correction of operational or technical deficiencies in the implementation of program responsibilities.

Decisions in all of these areas contribute to a vital intelligence effort and require the participation of the Director of Central Intelligence. It is essential that these decisions should not be influenced by other considerations than the need for maximum effectiveness and efficiency in the reconnaissance program, and that this program should not suffer for lack of informed support from the official of the government primarily charged with responsibility for intelligence activities. The ultimate responsibility of the Director of Central Intelligence for identifying and evaluating Soviet weapons technology, strategic military deployment and other threats of critical significance to national security, makes it essential that he should have an adequate voice in basic decisions relating to the reconnaissance program which is the basic source of intelligence on these matters.

The conclusions of the Board's report are generally consistent with these views and certain paragraphs are in full consonance with them. For example the report enjoins (page 9) "close and continuing collaboration between the Secretary of Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence with a view to ensuring" (a) the most productive possible utilization of national resources; (b) opportunities for the

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Director of Central Intelligence to survey progress under the program; and (c) evaluation of the need for new reconnaissance systems.

The responsibilities and prerogatives implied by this language, however, are not sustained by other provisions of the report which have contradictory implications and are not adequately reflected in the proposed Presidential Directive. For one thing, the program is defined as "a single program ... for the development, management, control and operation of all projects" (Recommendation 1, page 7) and primary responsibility and authority for "the management and conduct of reconnaissance activities" and "the tasking of personnel, facilities and other resources of the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency and other agencies" is vested in the Secretary of Defense (Recommendation 2, page 7). Recommendation 3 (page 8) provides for the delegation of the Secretary of Defense's responsibilities to "a Director responsible solely to the Secretary of Defense."

The reconnaissance program will be a successful intelligence effort which produces the hard information essential for the intelligence estimates on which strategic judgments are based only if there is full participation by the Director of Central Intelligence in the development and direction of the program. The role of the Director of Central Intelligence must include an adequate voice in decisions which affect the utilization of resources, the allocation of responsibilities and funds, and the scheduling and direction of missions. The agreement governing activity under the program should include an unequivocal affirmation of this principle.

In this connection Recommendation 8 (page 9) of the Board's report refers to the provision of the present NRO agreement relating to monitors. To the extent that

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this recommendation can be understood as proposing to eliminate the staff required by the Director of Central Intelligence for normal support and advice it is clearly incompatible with the exercise of his responsibilities. To ensure effective participation in the development and direction of the program, the Director of Central Intelligence (and presumably also the Secretary of Defense) must be free to utilize deputies, assistants and staff to any extent necessary.

B. Provision must be made to ensure that research and development potentialities of CIA are fully utilized.

The Board's report recognized the importance of full utilization of the facilities developed by CIA for the invention and development of new systems. It speaks of the "invaluable experience" of the Central Intelligence Agency which "has assembled a nucleus of scientific and technological talent, all of which can be brought to bear in introducing into the National Reconnaissance Program more effective means for the collection and processing of intelligence data." (Conclusion 5, page 5). The report further recommends appropriate action to ensure "that full utilization be made of the resources of" the Central Intelligence Agency as well as the Department of Defense "for the conduct of research projects looking to the development of new and improved aircraft and satellite reconnaissance vehicles, photographic and other sensors," etc. (Recommendation 6, page 9).

An important responsibility of the Director of Central Intelligence acting jointly with the Secretary of Defense (as I have pointed out above) is to see that assignments for research and development are allocated with a view to making the best use of the talents and capabilities of individual agencies. One of the reasons for making his right to participate in decisions of this nature explicit is to

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ensure that assignments of research responsibility will be made to the Central Intelligence Agency when appropriate.

A point which I would particularly like to urge is my belief that the "cutting edge" of advance thinking cannot be preserved within the Central Intelligence Agency if its role is confined to research and if the "responsibility for the management, over-all systems engineering, procurement and operation of all satellite reconnaissance systems" be assigned to the Air Force as proposed (Recommendation 5, page 10) in the Board's report. If this procedure is followed, we should recognize that we have decided as a matter of policy to place responsibility for future reconnaissance operations and improvements on a "single instrument basis" in the hands of the Air Force.

The Central Intelligence Agency should be charged not only with advance planning and research in specified areas of overhead reconnaissance, both satellite and aircraft, but should maintain a continuing responsibility for the development and production of the new systems developed. Delivery of individual "payloads" can then be made, as needed, on a requisitioned basis, to the organization charged with the conduct of individual operations.

Under such an arrangement continued growth and improvement in the systems can be expected, comparable to the process we have witnessed in the U-2 and the CORONA programs. In both these systems very significant growth has taken place as they have developed and matured. The U-2's operating characteristics were improved with new engines as they were developed,

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and the planes were modified to operate from aircraft

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carriers (with recent impressive results) as it became apparent that foreign bases would be denied us. Cameras and films likewise have been improved. The OXCART vehicle is of course a follow-on to provide the replacement for the U-2.

Similar progress has been made in the CORONA program which has been radically altered and improved since its initial introduction.

If responsibility for production of the system is removed from those responsible for its initial invention and turned over to others, motivation for continuing improvement will be seriously impaired. I am not impressed with the arguments of those who maintain that the organization responsible for actual operations must have control of production of the "payload." Many years of practical experience in business and government have convinced me that operations can be successfully conducted using components (in this case the "payload") which are furnished to the operating entity by some other organization.

In the context of a discussion of the continued contribution to be expected from the Central Intelligence Agency, it seems to me important to make clear that program responsibility and operational assignments should be levied upon the Central Intelligence Agency through normal command channels.

Recommendation 2 (page 7) confers upon the Secretary of Defense, as Executive Agent for the program, authority for "the tasking of personnel, facilities and other resources of . . . the Central Intelligence Agency." Any ambiguity occasioned by this recommendation should be clarified and the principle established that instructions relating to tasks or assignments should be transmitted to the Central

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Intelligence Agency through normal command channels although informal working relationships should of course be encouraged.

6. I believe that establishment of the principles which I have described above is an essential prerequisite to an effective national reconnaissance program. I therefore recommend that these principles be accepted for incorporation in a revised agreement governing the national reconnaissance effort and that instructions be issued accordingly.

Original Signed
by

JOHN A. McCONE
Director

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